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**AMBASSADOR JAMES F. MORIARTY'S REMARKS
ADDRESSING THE PARLIAMENT ON THE OCCASION OF
THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE
NDI PARLIAMENTARY ORIENTATION PROGRAM**

DHAKA, FEBRUARY 23 -- U.S. Ambassador James F. Moriarty made the following remarks at the opening ceremony of the NDI Parliamentary Orientation Program in Dhaka today:

(Begin Text)

Honorable Speaker, Md. Abdul Hamid, Honorable Members of Parliament, Your Excellency Stephen Evans Distinguished Guests, Let me begin by thanking the Honorable Members of Parliament for participating in this important orientation program. Your attendance here indicates a strong desire to represent your constituents effectively. I congratulate you on the elections that brought you here. I wish you well in your work as members of the 9th Jatiyo “Sangsad.”

As you all know, a lawmaker has heavy responsibilities. In addition to enacting laws, Members of Parliament conduct investigations and provide oversight. This initial orientation will give you guidance on how best to exercise these legislative duties - duties which are crucial to the functioning of democracy.

Bangladesh already has in place Parliamentary structures for effective governance. You have rules of procedure. You have a system of Parliamentary committees to provide oversight, hold investigations and consider legislation. You have a Secretariat to support lawmakers in these and other legislative endeavors.

My Government and other development partners stand ready to assist you in improving these structures. For example, we and other donors are training Parliament staff and would be willing to help in other ways to modernize the Jatiyo Sangsad. One suggestion might be for you to open committee hearings to the public.

You may also be interested to know that in my country, every “freshman class” of congressmen undergoes an orientation program similar to the one that started today. Every newly-elected representative receives a thick volume called the House Rules and Manual. This includes, among other things, an original manual written by Thomas Jefferson for his own guidance when he presided over the Senate in the late eighteenth century.

This is updated for every new session as we recognize that we must constantly strive to improve our rules, procedures and ability to govern transparently.

Organizational graphs alone do not make Parliaments effective. Legislators make Parliaments effective. Legislatures that truly serve the people must be populated with lawmakers willing to rise above day-to-day politics to act in the national interest. Without this spirit of good will, the structures of Parliament are little more than a hollow shell.

It is my strong belief that a Parliament can not serve the best interests of the people unless its members opt for compromise over boycotts. A Parliament can not serve the best interests of the people unless its majority party is willing to work collegially with the opposition and give it a meaningful role in governance. A Parliament can not serve the best interests of the people unless the opposition is willing to engage the majority party in active, thoughtful debate.

As members of Bangladesh’s Jatiyo Sangsad it is your duty to rise above partisan politics and to focus on the important work of nation-building. Your constituents demand no less. My conversations with Bangladeshis from all walks of life have convinced me they want you to work together to tackle the many economic and security issues of the day that will determine the country’s future.

Now, more than ever, you have a historic responsibility to build an effective and inclusive democratic system. This Jatiyo Sangsad stands as a living symbol of the progress made and the hope that lies ahead. America stands with you, as a friend, to help you on your journey.

I am extremely pleased that the Government of the United States, through USAID, is the sponsor of this orientation session. We look forward to working with all of you and welcome suggestions on how we might best assist you. Thank you, again, for your participation in this program, and thank you to the organizers for their hard work in making this event a great success.

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** As prepared for delivery*

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